

These very positive developments are contingent on television stations vacating this spectrum by 2006—a provision in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. The major barrier is a provision in that same law that allows stations to keep their analog channels beyond 2006 until at least 85% of the households in the relevant market have access to digital television signals. The problem, in short, is that there is no time certain for clearing the band for public safety. Neither public safety agencies nor radio equipment manufacturers can proceed until there is certainty. The benefits of this new spectrum will not be available to public safety until this current uncertainty is rectified.

The HERO Act addresses the issue of band clearing by providing a date certain that this spectrum will be available for public safety. This is consistent with the original intent of Congress to provide public safety with the key element of command and control—communications. Enhanced communications capability will clearly enable America's fire and emergency service to better deal with large scale incidents, natural disasters and acts of terrorism.

Very truly yours,

CHIEF JOHN M. BUCKMAN,
President.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES,
December 3, 2001.

Hon. JANE HARMAN,
*U.S. House of Representatives, Cannon House
Office Bldg., Washington, DC.*

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE HARMAN: On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo), I would like to commend you, and Representative Curt Weldon, for developing the, "Homeland Emergency Response Operations (HERO) Act."

The HERO Act is fully consistent with NACo's policy on releasing the 700 MHz band for public safety purposes, which reads as follows:

"Improve Public Safety and Emergency Management Communications: Increase interoperability for both voice and data, release additional spectrum in the 700 MHz band for public safety and emergency management use, and eliminate interference problems in public safety communications."

NACo believes it is critical that the 700 MHz band be made available at a date certain. This would facilitate counties making appropriate plans for utilization of the spectrum, develop solutions to the interoperability challenges for both voice and data, and allow the private sector to provide the technologies and equipment necessary to make for efficient utilization of the spectrum.

Clearly the events of September 11th bring into focus the important role interopera-

ability has in disaster response and making this spectrum available will enhance our ability to carry out our role as "first responders".

Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

JAVIER GONZALES,
*President,
National Association of Counties
Commissioner, Santa Fe, NM.*

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ARSON
INVESTIGATORS, INC.,
St. Louis, MO, November 30, 2001.

Hon. JANE HARMAN,
*U.S. House of Representatives, Cannon House
Office Building, Washington, DC.*

DEAR CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: The International Association of Arson Investigators is pleased to endorse the "Homeland Emergency Response Operations Network Act".

This vital legislation is long overdue. Expedited assignment of the 761-776 and 794-806 megahertz to public safety use will provide much needed additional radio spectrum for America's emergency responders.

As one of the nation's major fire service groups we look forward to standing with you at next week's press conference. Following introduction we would be honored to work to seek passage of this important measure.

Sincerely,

STEPHEN P. AUSTIN,
Director of Governmental Relations.